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Department of Community Services
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

Mrs. Morris

MEMORANDUM

September 26, 1952

TO: Mr. Nelson C. Jackson
Director, Community Services

FROM: Roy E. Norris,
Field Representative

SUBJ: TRENTON-BUCKS COUNTY VISIT - September 16-20, 1952

Purpose: To find Negroes who have attempted or might be encouraged to attempt to purchase houses in Levittown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

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Background Information

As a result of a conference between Mrs. Samuel I. Rosenman, Mrs. Sophia Jacobs, Mr. Lester Granger, Mr. Reginald Johnson, and myself, on the NUL-Bucks County operation, it was decided that the NUL Housing Committee should have the names and addresses of Negroes actually known to have attempted to purchase houses in the Levittown-Bucks County development. Mrs. Rosenman and Mr. Johnson had just returned from a conference with Mr. James Felt in Mr. Felt's office at which time it appeared imperative that the NUL Housing Committee be prepared to combat any possible statement from Mr. Levitt which might be to the effect that no Negroes have applied. It was realized that during and since my several trips into the area, that it had been impossible to secure the actual names of more than two Negroes in this connection. It was decided that I go to Bucks County immediately and attempt to secure such needed information before the Housing Committee meeting scheduled for some forty hours later.

Innumerable persons were seen in an attempt to get the information wanted. Quite a few people had heard that Negroes have gone over to the Levitt development but only two such persons were known by name. I, therefore, began seeing individuals who, after due consideration of their circumstances, might be satisfactory persons to apply. The most desirable situation would be to have Negroes apply, who, because of the type of work they are engaged in, their economic stability, and their personality traits, should certainly be acceptable as residents of Levittown.

Action Taken

The following persons were interviewed and asked to make a special trip to Levittown at their very earliest convenience:

1. Sammy Braggs (contractor)
2. David Bray (minister)
3. John L. Dent (factory worker)

4. Harrison Fisher (chemist - Rohn Hass)
5. John McDonald (construction worker at Fort Dix)
6. Dr. E. G. McGruder (physician)
7. Walter Miles (factory worker)
8. Roque Sanes (factory worker)
9. John Shack (carpenter at Belle Meade)
10. Lloyd Williams (teacher, public school system, Trenton)

Because of possible untoward ramifications of this move, I made arrangements to have an affidavit taken from each person named above. Mrs. Carolyn D. Moore agreed to notarize affidavits for those persons living in Trenton; and Mr. C. Melvin Rose (a Bucks County resident with a real estate office in Philadelphia, and who is chairman of the Housing Committee of the Bucks County Human Relations Council) agreed to do the same for those persons living in Bucks County. Because Mr. Rose was not available until Sunday, five people living in Bucks County were asked to go to his home on Sunday morning. It was decided that only these two people should notarize affidavits since both of them are well-versed in the problem presented to Negroes regarding Levittown, and can probably be depended upon not to discuss this step with other people.

As a result of these efforts, six affidavits are now in my hands at the National office.

While in Trenton I made the usual courtesy call with Mr. Auerbach, executive secretary of the Trenton Council of Social Agencies, to advise him of my presence and that additional NUL work was being done in his area. He said there was nothing new to report to me other than the growing insistence of the feeling that time is slipping away and that we need to "get on the ball" with some day-to-day or week-by-week work among Bucks County people.

I talked also with Mrs. Merrill, executive secretary of the Trenton Council on Human Relations, who was unable to advise of any progress made with respect to our recommended Training Program in Trenton. However, for forty minutes she insisted that I arrange to have an interview with Mr. Milon, plant manager, Ternstedt Division, General Motors, and with Mr. Hill, president, Baldwin-Hill Corporation. It is Mrs. Merrill's hope that Mr. Milon will accept the chairmanship of the proposed Training Committee. His predecessor at General Motors, Mr. Shriner, had committed himself to me early last Spring about taking the leadership for this program. Mr. Hill was wanted to give his weight to the program because of the very large influential following that he carries in Trenton. I reminded Mrs. Merrill that our letter from Mr. Granger and addressed to Mr. Auerbach, spelled-out the relationship of the National Urban League Field Representative to Trenton, and that that relationship would preclude my taking the initiative with respect to putting the people to work whom I suggested several months ago. I told Mrs. Merrill that it was up to her to arrange for both appointments; and that if my office approved, I would return to engage in these two conferences with Mr. Milon and Mr. Hill.

I suggested that Mrs. Merrill and Mr. Janison, an official of her organization, be present and that my role would be simply that of the consultant, that the conferences would be her responsibility. Mrs. Merrill finally promised to try and arrange two conferences for either Wednesday or Friday of the week of September 22. It was understood that she would notify me as soon as the appointments are scheduled.

Conclusions and Recommendations

My presence in Bucks County to actually "develop a case" with respect to Levittown seemed to be the very first down-to-earth effort that Bucks County and Trenton residents knew about, with respect to this problem about which they are very much concerned. I think the National Urban League went up a notch in the estimation of all those who were aware of something being afoot. Each person interviewed regarding making personal applications at Levittown was more than appreciative and more than happy to give their little bit in what they consider a gigantic job of getting something done about the discriminatory development that Mr. Levitt has placed in their previously easy-going, relatively well-integrated community.

All through Bucks County, Negroes live next door to white people. Very frequently a Negro family is found in an otherwise all-white two or three-block area. There seems to be nowhere in Bucks County where there are as many families as there will be in Levittown among which Negroes do not live. Apparently Negroes are becoming more and more bitter about this the first completely lily-white area in Bucks County and consider that this "foreign-pattern" is being superimposed upon them.

Regarding the Trenton Training Program: several persons in the community want to let the Trenton Council on Human Relations "break its neck" on this Training Program project, then blast TCRR for its failure, and otherwise vent their long-soothing disgust with TCRR. These feelings continue despite my attempts to channel that interest into more productive activity.

It seems of continuing importance that such intensive face-to-face work done with the average citizen in Bucks County and Trenton be stepped-up.

It is recommended that:

1. A return visit should be made within the next ten days or two weeks.
2. Some community volunteer organization should be developed, the relationship of which should be directly with the National Urban League to facilitate the latter's operational interest in the mutual welfare of all groups involved. This proposed Bucks County group should have a loose enough relationship with the NUL to enable it to undertake community-centered projects on its own, regarding the development of community activity leading towards the inclusion of Negroes in Levittown and in Fareless Village, and to keep track of the various aspects of the racial employment situation (and possibilities) at Fareless Works and at other expanding plants in the area.
3. Conferences planned by top NUL Board and staff members with Mr. Levitt and others who might aid in this general problem, should be held as soon as possible; and, selected items of the results of these conferences definitely should be carefully reported to our proposed colleagues in Bucks County.

Names of Persons Contacted

1. Mr. Peter Auerbach, Executive Secretary
Trenton Council of Social Agencies
1 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey

2. Mr. Joseph E. Bolden
Bristol, Pennsylvania
3. Mr. Samy Braggs
629 Swain Street
Bristol, Pennsylvania
4. Mr. David Bray
32 West End Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey
5. Mr. John L. Dent, Jr.
237 Spring Street
Trenton, New Jersey
6. Mr. Harrison Fisher
(Negro chemist, Rohm & Hass -
Bristol plant)
345 Washington Street
Bristol, Pennsylvania
7. Mr. H. Charles Ford
Dist. Dir., United Steelworkers
of America
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
8. Mr. Kelly,
Business Agent
United Steelworkers of America
203 East State Street
Trenton, New Jersey
9. Mr. Charles Kovacs,
Business Agent
United Steelworkers of America
203 East State Street
Trenton, New Jersey
10. Mr. and Mrs. Alvin J. Lewis
57½ North Pennsylvania Avenue
Morrisville, Pennsylvania
11. Dr. and Mrs. John Marshall
131 Perry Street
Trenton, New Jersey
12. Mr. Francis L. Mathews, Manager
Pennsylvania State Employment Service
430 Buckley Street
Bristol, Pennsylvania
13. Mr. John E. McDonald
83 Spring Street
Trenton, New Jersey
14. Dr. and Mrs. E. G. McGruder
237 Wood Street
Bristol, Pennsylvania
15. Mrs. J. C. Morrill,
Executive Secretary
Trenton Council on Human Relations
203 East State Street
Trenton, New Jersey
16. Mr. Walter Miles
54 Delaware Avenue
Morrisville, Pennsylvania
17. Mrs. Carolyn D. Moore
237 Spring Street
Trenton, New Jersey
18. Mr. Clifford R. Moore,
Attorney-at-Law
(Chairman NUL-DWUF Advisory
Committee)
Broad Street Bank Building
Trenton, New Jersey
19. Mrs. Comfort Porter
Falsington, Pennsylvania
20. Mrs. C. Melvin Ross
Falsington, Pennsylvania
21. Mr. Roque Sanes
634 Spruce Street
Bristol, Pennsylvania
22. Mr. Charles Williams
(President, Carver Community Center;
President, Trenton Branch NAACP)
219 Spring Street
Trenton, New Jersey
23. Mr. Lloyd L. Williams
10 Beakes Street
Trenton, New Jersey

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Copies to: Mr. Granger
Mr. Moss
Mr. Thomas
Mr. Parris
Mr. Johnson

Miss Tannoyhill
Mr. Finley
Mr. Pope
Dr. Banner
Mr. Eason